

Lesser Gods Chapter 5

By

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SCENE 1

HERA (NAR.)

I don't think I've been away from Rhea this long. Well, when I was in the hospital... After... But I wasn't her primary chaperone then. At least I knew where ever she was, she was safe. I don't think I've ever gone this long without sleeping, either.

HERA

Excuse me?

HERA (NAR.)

The only guard in the otherwise empty Yolk turns around.

HERA

Is there any way I could get a coffee?

GUARD

Yes m'am.

HERA (NAR.)

And she dips out of the room. I'm alone. It feels... insane that the last time I was in here was when we found out about Iris. God, was that really just three days ago? I can't think about Iris' death right now.

Eros must be scared. But Eros must feel so many things right now. I hate him for dragging Rhea into this.

With a ping, the door slides open. It's Char.

CHAR

Hera.

HERA (NAR.)

And in a few strides he crosses the room to me, takes me in his arms in a big bear hug. What he lacks in softness, he makes up for in warmth.

CHAR

We're gonna find her. You know we're gonna find her.

HERA (NAR.)

I step back, nod. I didn't even realize Artemis was here. She has never been a talker. When we were younger it kind of bugged me. Now, I'm thankful for it. I nod to her.

CHAR

18 hours is nothing. Pretty sure she's slept longer than that.

HERA (NAR.)

I hear the woosh of the door. As long as it isn't Black. No one is saying it's my fault but she-

APOLLO

Hey.

HERA (NAR.)

I said "anyone" but I meant "anyone but Apollo." He lingers in the doorway holding a metal mug. He's so still I think the automatic sensor will forget he's there and close on him.

CHAR

Hey, man.

HERA (NAR.)

Char offers. Apollo enters the room, places the mug in front of me.

HERA

Thank you.

HERA (NAR.)

I avoid his gaze, guiltily. Yesterday morning I made a mistake. I know how he feels- felt? And I exploited that for what I needed at that moment. I wrote an apology message but decided to wait until I saw him in person. Then Rhea- and now... Well, easier thought than done. I sip the hot coffee. Light and sweet. Exactly how I take it.

HERA

Thank you.

HERA (NAR.)

I repeat. He turns to Char.

APOLLO

Don't think you're supposed to be in here, Char.

CHAR

Yeah. I was just saying "hi." And maybe putting off my alone time with Pers.

HERA (NAR.)
Black has called a meeting with just the four of us.
It's actually unlike her to be late.

APOLLO
The officer outside will escort you to the holding room.

HERA (NAR.)
Apollo's voice is flat. Char steps out, brushes past Dion.

DION
Hey everyone.

HERA (NAR.)
No one says anything.

DION
Any word?

HERA (NAR.)
I shake my head.

DION
How's Eros?

APOLLO
He was freaked out enough already. I tried to keep the Rhea thing from him until we knew more but... Detective Blue told him. He's scared.

DION
I bet. You're accused of murder and your alibi ditches you instead of sticking to her story? You should tell him to throw her under the bus.

HERA
What?

APOLLO
You don't need to tell me how to do my job. I've had it for 15 years.

HERA (NAR.)
Dion has never been... a friend...

Always overcompensating for one thing or another, but passionately devoted to people he cares about. He was originally called up to be trained to be Iris' chap. It would have been a disaster. Pair the most insecure person with a deified genius. Luckily, Pers needed a new chap and her situation was deemed... urgent.

DION

I just assumed after all this time you'd be a little better at it.

APOLLO

Don't talk to me about accountability.

HERA (NAR.)

Apollo spits. He always tries to be a little more bombastic when he feels attacked. But he isn't done.

APOLLO

And don't think anyone in this room doesn't know just how well you're getting along with Pers.

HERA (NAR.)

Everyone freezes. Dion stares at him.

DION

Well, while you're in a sharing mood, why don't you remind us why you got taken off Iris' detail?

SOUND: SCREECH/CRASH OF A CHAIR FALLING OVER

HERA (NAR.)

In one swift motion, Apollo launches out of his seat and grabs Dion by his shirt collar.

APOLLO

Don't you ever fucking-

HERA (NAR.)

He snarls. Artemis tries to pull Dion away from him. It takes me a full five- ten seconds to stand and grab Apollo. My face, hot with unexpected embarrassment and anger. At who or why, I'm not even sure. My hands are around his waist, pulling hard. My head is- I didn't know he knew. He can't, we ended things pretty long after he was transferred so no one would-

APOLLO

I asked to be taken off. It's none of your business why-

HERA (NAR.)

Dion's eyes are scared, but his mouth is twisted into a forced smile-

DION

What? Glass house getting a little hot?

HERA (NAR.)

That's not something Dion would say, it sounds like Pers-it's... If I had to guess. Rhea wouldn't have told her. Would Iris have- but Apollo draws his fist back- I grab his arm so when he tries to swing he falls backward onto me. Released, Dion falls backwards-

ROSALIND

Enough. Enough!

HERA (NAR.)

It's Black. Apollo shuffles to his feet. Looks down once to me, red in the face, and looks away quickly. I try and push myself up on my arms, pain shoots through my left wrist. I wince. A guard who must've entered with Black helps me to my feet.

BLACK

Are you fucking insane?

HERA (NAR.)

She spits into Apollo's face. I cradle my wrist and sit behind my coffee, no longer drowsy.

ROSALIND

In the past three days we've physically lost two of our wards, one is in jail on suspicion of killing another. Do I really need to tell you how to behave?

HERA (NAR.)

I look at her more closely now. Her eyes have dark rings around them, her usually perfect hair is unkempt. She removes a small silver case from her pocket, shakes a white pill into her hand there in front of all of us and her guard. She's never taken anti's so publicly. She sees my stare, glares back as if daring me to say something.

HERA

Where's Shylock?

HERA (NAR.)
I stammer and look away.

ROSALIND
He's been relocated.

APOLLO
What?

HERA (NAR.)
Apollo is shocked out of his previous state.

APOLLO
Why?

ROSALIND
His services were no longer needed.

HERA
But everything is falling apart.

HERA (NAR.)
She doesn't even look at me as she responds-

ROSALIND
Exactly. He was the person in charge of their intellectual, social, and moral growth. I think the past few days have shown he failed spectacularly. The public needed to see someone being held responsible.

HERA (NAR.)
She settles into her chair.

ROSALIND
Be thankful it wasn't you.

HERA (NAR.)
I swallow hard.

ROSALIND
Hope your wrist isn't broken.

HERA (NAR.)
I had forgotten I was even holding it.

ROSALIND
Can't have you in a cast of any kind on camera. Don't need to look weaker than we already do.

HERA
I'm going on camera?

ROSALIND
You need to make an appeal to Rhea. Get her to bring Clark back.

HERA
But where ever she is- what if she's off the grid?

ROSALIND
I'm sorry Hera, do you have something better to be doing?

HERA (NAR.)
I can't think of a time she's ever spoken to me that way. There's an incredibly bizarre moment where I remind myself to tell Rhea this when I see her- followed by a pang of pain when I realize I don't know when that will be.

SCENE 3

SOUND: A BALL BOUNCING AGAINST A WALL, LOW.

PERSEPHONE (NAR.)
"How would you describe your current emotional state?"
Well, pretty great. The past 24 hours have been wonderful. It started with Black requesting my presence last night- before anyone knew Rhea was even running. I lean back over the tablet with the well being quiz. I type- "Concerned."
"What would improve that emotional state?"

SOUND: THE BALL BOUNCING.

PERSEPHONE (NAR.)
Someone throwing that ball down a trash shoot. I type:
"I just want my friends home safe." Don't know if Eros is ever coming home. "Friend." I pause.

"I just want my friend home safe again." Again is important, I want Black to know I trust her. Especially after our private conversation last night. I still can't believe it. I've never been asked to have a meeting with her. But she pinged me. Guess my value went up when I became one of two instead of one of three. I suppress a smile when I think of how she'll treat me now.

CHAR

Are you really filling that out?

PERSEPHONE

Yeah, nothing better to do.

CHAR

Want to play catch?

PERSEPHONE

No.

PERSEPHONE (NAR.)

He bounces the ball.

CHAR

How are you doing?

PERSEPHONE (NAR.)

The personal question is a little unexpected.

PERSEPHONE

I'm... it's weird.

PERSEPHONE (NAR.)

He laughs.

CHAR

It's quiet. I feel like every day I got at least one show. Rhea picks a fight with you. You retaliate. Or the other way around. Iris jumps in. Tries to make peace. Only makes things worse.

PERSEPHONE

You and Eros, lying low until it all blows over. Or at least until it starts all over.

CHAR

She's going to be back. And she's going to have that new guy with her.

PERSEPHONE (NAR.)

He says firmly. I have to stop myself from correcting him, Clark. Clark. So much more than just the "new guy". I can't even put into words how strange it was to see someone so... uniquely familiar. His build, his face. He was completely unremarkable except for the fact that he was the most interesting person I'd ever seen.

PERSEPHONE

Yes. And then you guys can have three way fights.

PERSEPHONE (NAR.)

He bounces the ball to me.

CHAR

Or three v three-

PERSEPHONE (NAR.)

But there's a catch in his voice and I realize it's because there will never be the three girls to fight again. I look down at the rubber ball in my hand. Iris is dead. Even if Rhea and Clark come back or if by some miracle Eros isn't convicted, Iris is gone forever. Everything is different. Nothing can be the same... I might as well take advantage of that.

SOUND: THE BOUNCE OF THE BALL.

SCENE 4

SOUND: A BEEP, A HEAVY METAL DOOR SHIFTING

HERA (NAR.)

My wrist is thickly bandaged, not in a cast though. Just a sprain. People keep holding doors for me, carrying things for me. I hate it. It feels less polite and more just because they must think I'm weak... I feel weak. And totally stupid... I have only ever been down here once. A doctor who I had known was being tried for treason, we were told.

EROS

Hera?

HERA (NAR.)

Eros asks just above a whisper. His hair is matted, He seems to have chewed through the collar of his thin shirt. His knees are pulled close to his chest in the small cell.

Hera

Hi. You look... terrible.

EROS

I haven't seen a mirror in three days. What's your excuse?

HERA (NAR.)

I'd laugh if I had the energy.

EROS

Did you break one with your hand?

HERA

No. It's-

HERA (NAR.)

But I can't read something in his light eyes... Can't tell if he'd be very sympathetic. Not that that's even what I want.

HERA

Things are just tense with Rhea-

EROS

Is she okay?

HERA

I don't know...

No one knows where she went.

EROS

Are we sure she ran away?

HERA

She took a few bags. And Clark.

EROS

Who is- oh... right. They didn't tell me that. They aren't telling me much. Good.

HERA (NAR.)

He sits, unfurls his knees, leans against the concrete wall behind him.

EROS

They weren't going to let her out of here.

HERA

How do you know that?

EROS

The same way I know they aren't going to let me out of here.

HERA

You don't know that. You-

HERA (NAR.)

He snorts. This is... I've never seen him like this. So cold. He's always been so infuriatingly easy going. He must know that it was what I said about Rhea that got him put here. He chews his collar for a moment.

EROS

Tell me, how did I kill her?

HERA (NAR.)

Something stings about his tone. Condescending in it's cageyness.

HERA

Eros-

EROS

Oh come on, you must have a theory.

HERA

I just didn't know why you were lying, I just wanted to keep Rhea out of whatever was going on.

EROS

What did you think would happen? You know how they treat people, how-

HERA

But I didn't think they would treat you that way.

HERA (NAR.)

And that's true.

HERA

I thought they'd give you the benefit of the doubt.
Whatever happened-

EROS

Tell me what you think happened!

HERA (NAR.)

I know I shouldn't say anything, shouldn't go to that place, to that scene. But I don't know what other damage can be done. I can see them there in her room, her frantically having just injected the fertility drugs. Trying to kiss him, but he is repulsed by her desperation. Their faces a few inches from each other, hushed argument, tempers rising, Eros' eyes blacker and bigger thanks to the pills, Iris' light hair hanging limp around her face, make up lightly reapplied just before he came over. Her blue eyes, tearing. She trying to tell him the pressure she's under. How he can't understand- everyone funneling time and energy into her- all she needs to do is work. Hang onto it. Promising him it's going to be better when it happens. Better for everyone. Him arguing that of course he understands, how could he not? Angered she thinks so little of him. If anything it's harder for him because he feels guilty he can't do more. It's an argument I don't need to imagine because I've lived it... She's not staring into Apollo's kind face though, it's the exhausted, furious one of Eros demanding she respect his part in all this. And then what? Does she laugh then, still close enough to count the red veins cracking the whites of his eyes. In a jagged motion he grabs the syringe off the table, plunges it into her neck. And as the needle punctures her artery what ever bubble they were fighting in shatters, he backs away from her, just as shocked as she is when she falls to the ground. Whatever rage was there is gone, the argument over what they want to happen evaporated in the light of what has happened. I'm still staring at him, and hoping he cannot remember what her face looked like in those last few moments. When I speak again my voice is quieter.

HERA

I think it was an accident. I think you went over there and had a fight.

EROS
That could have been anyone.

HERA
Not everyone was there that night.

EROS
That's exactly why they're saying it was me.

HERA (NAR.)
He drops his voice, conspiratorially.

EROS
I think it's more than a little convenient for them that she's dead. They don't need me anymore either.

HERA
Eros-

EROS
Is it supposed to be a coincidence that after months of advanced, failed trials with me, they bring in someone completely new?

HERA
That can't be... It's just the timing.

EROS
Once you told them Rhea was lying I get locked up... What's the phrase? Two birds... Guess that makes you the stone.

HERA
What are you talking about?

HERA (NAR.)
There's footsteps outside and he sits back again.

EROS
I think you should go.

HERA
I can't, I need-

HERA (NAR.)

On that he raises his eyebrows like he's ready for me to dig my own grave.

HERA

I have to go make this plea on air for her. I just need to know if you have any idea where she went. In all your time... She must have said something about somewhere.

HERA (NAR.)

He smiles, that lazy, familiar grin.

EROS

I don't know where she is, but I hope they never find out.

SCENE 4

SOUND: THE HUM OF AN ELECTRIC ENGINE

RHEA (NAR.)

Three days ago, I didn't know Clark existed. I kind of wish I still didn't.

CLARK

But it's that increased number coupled with the total lack of nurturing that makes them so successful. Sorry, I never get to talk about insect reproduction this much.

RHEA (NAR.)

It's been hours and hours of this. He just goes on and on, nervously jumping from one boring subject to the next. And I'm here trying not to fall asleep at the wheel. I mean, I feel bad for the guy. But this is just not how I saw my great escape. Oh that's right, I owe y'all an explanation. So I realized once Orsino started getting handsy that we must have been alone.

Or it was at least worth finding out. So a few seconds after he left to grab that file I was oh so interested in, I stood up, opened the door, and held my breath. Once I realized I hadn't been tackled or tased, I quickly walked outside and had an officer drop me back at the Bricks. I wanted them to think they knew where I was so they would take their time catching up with me. By the time they actually started panicking, I would be long gone.

CLARK

Rhea?

RHEA (NAR.)

I was not expecting this guy to be three feet up my ass when I got back. I knew Hera had her tests that morning (like she has every morning) but I was really hoping she'd take Sparky here with her.

CLARK

Rhea!

RHEA

No yeah, bug sex.

CLARK

What? No, I asked how you learned to drive.

RHEA

Oh. When we were like eleven, Shylock organized this week called "How the City Works" Shylock is a wonderfully creative man- that name is a pun. So we spent different days at places that housed the city's central servers, the department of power, the water treatment facility, and the sanitation bureau which... stunk.

RHEA (NAR.)

I raise my eyebrows at him as he gently guides my face back towards the road.

CLARK

Ah, also a pun.

RHEA

So, Eros and I decided to ask to see how the cars worked on their own. How they used to be before auto pilot. Thrilled we were showing any interest- Shylock let this guy do a whole tutorial. Which he regretted less than an hour later when we drove a garbage truck through a wall.

CLARK

Not inspiring a lot of confidence here.

RHEA

Trust me, I've gotten better. We used to take these little guys out all the time.

CLARK

Can we turn back on auto pilot now that you've got it going?

RHEA

Nope, that's when the GPS tracker will get triggered.
As Eros and I found out last summer.

CLARK

Why doesn't the GPS work even when the car is manually driven?

RHEA

Remember the thing with the tunnels?

CLARK

Ah yes. The conspiracies.

RHEA

It's not a conspiracy.

CLARK

Couldn't it have just been overlooked? And by the time they figured it out, it was too late to fix all of them?

RHEA (NAR.)

Something (and by something I mean everything) about Clark makes me think he has never realized he's been lied too.

CLARK

Not trying to be argumentative. Just trying to give you a different perspective.

RHEA

Oh, thank you. That's what I needed.

CLARK

No, I am- I mean, I just think if Black and everyone were the puppet masters you say they are, people would know about it.

RHEA

Clark, we're the people. You haven't seen it yet, but you're nothing but a piece of property to them.

CLARK

Don't explain my own narrative to me. You don't know what my experience has been like- I would go months without seeing sunlight, or anyone within thirty years of my own age or food that wasn't from a can-

RHEA

The only thing I know about you is that you don't work either.

RHEA (NAR.)

And before I can even fully turn to look at him, he jumps and gestures to the wheel.

CLARK

I mean, if I can trust them after all of that, you should be able to. They've given you everything. Your... paranoia is a luxury.

RHEA

It's not paranoia. It's fact. Our feelings are secondary to our purpose.

CLARK

That's called responsibility.

RHEA

I know what responsibility is.

CLARK

I'm sorry if you've taken enough pharmaceuticals to forget that.

RHEA

It's my body, I can do what I want with it on my time. They make me-

CLARK

God, see that kind of selfishness is why people... For someone living with the pride of sacrifice, you've actually given up very little.

RHEA

Do you realize how many times I've had to come home smelling like my sister's ex boyfriend? Or had to humiliate myself and Char in front of a dozen screens?

To pretend that's normal? Or worse, realize for us- it is.

RHEA (NAR.)

I'm embarrassed by how my voice cracks. How it hangs in the silence that follows it. I'm alone with the image of Hera's face after the first time I had to cop with Apollo. I was 16, they were still together. As soon as our dinner was dropped off, she took her plate to her room. Claiming she had work. I felt dirty. Guilty.

Angry with them. But after a few minutes she must've changed her mind. Came to my room and said nothing beyond "What're we watching tonight?"

Clark can't understand why what we do is hard because he hasn't experienced it.

RHEA

You don't understand what it's like to hurt your family because you've never had one.

CLARK

Look I'm sorry your relationships are complicated. It's just, I don't think our happiness is more important than the future of humanity.

RHEA

What is the point of saving humanity if we lose it along the way? You don't understand that you are allowed to be angry.

CLARK

Well you must trust them on some level.

RHEA (NAR.)

Now he's going to tell me how I feel? Fantastic. You know, before this conversation I actually felt bad about lying to him.

CLARK

The only reason we're all the way out here is because they told you it was safe.

RHEA (NAR.)

I turn to look at him, because I want to see the look on his face the first time he realizes he's been lied to-

CLARK
RHEA!

RHEA (NAR.)
Big mistake.

SOUND: SCREECHING OF TIRES.

RHEA (NAR.)
I don't see the huge, felled tree blocking the road until it's too late. I swerve to avoid it and we fly off the highway and rapidly descend into the dense brush below. The last thing I see is him, his eyes shut tightly, his hands wrapped around his head. I have a second to realize I've never seen something so child-like.

END OF EPISODE